

STATE SENATOR • DEBORAH CHERRY • 26TH DISTRICT

Cherry Press Release

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Senator Cherry Holds Town Hall Meeting on Providing Quality Care for Seniors **More choices, adequate funding top priorities for Senate Democrats**

LANSING — Proactively addressing one of Michigan's most pressing policy issues, Senator Deb Cherry (D-Burton) hosted a long term care town hall meeting today at the Burton Senior Center. Senator Cherry, a member of the Governor's Long Term Care Task Force, discussed with seniors and aging experts ways to offer more flexibility in care.

Estimates show that by 2010 the number of Michigan residents who will need long-term care will likely outnumber the workers available to care for them. By 2020, 1 in 6 Michigan citizens will be over 65 years old.

"Seniors deserve to age with dignity in a safe, comfortable environment," said Cherry. "Sometimes that can be achieved by staying home with loved ones instead of moving into a nursing facility, but our current system doesn't always make that option feasible. Senate Democrats and the Governor are committed to enacting reforms that will provide more choices and ensure top-notch care for every senior."

| The Long Term Care Task force identified a number of recommendations to improve the system:

- **Fully Fund MI-Choice Program:** MI-Choice waivers are the mechanism by which Medicaid long term care recipients obtain funding for in-home and community-based care, but currently adequate funding has not been provided by the state to allow all of the seniors interested to participate. On average, caring for someone requiring daily monitoring costs \$43 per day if that person lives in their

own home. It costs Medicaid \$140 per day – more than three times as much - to care for that same person in a nursing home or other institutionalized facility.

- **Single Point of Access:** Currently, consumers must piece together from many different agencies a package that will serve their own specific needs. The Task Force recommends creating a system in which consumers can access all of the necessary services from one centralized point.
- **Improve Long Term Care Worker Conditions:** Caregivers in the long term care industry are usually severely underpaid and often work without access to healthcare themselves.

“Long term care workers are entrusted with caring for our parents and our grandparents, and they could eventually care for each of us,” said Cherry. “Yet these workers often work for poverty-level wages under extremely difficult conditions. Our loved ones and those who care for them deserve better.”

A copy of the final report by Governor’s Long Term Care Task Force is available at:
<http://www.ihcs.msu.edu/LTC/default.htm>

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